

Research on Cultural Industry Innovation from the Perspective of New Quality Productivity

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ABSTRACT

Against the backdrop of intensifying global competition in the cultural industry, China's cultural industry faces challenges such as "cultural discount" and "narrative dilemma." However, "Nezha: The Devil Child Conquers the Dragon King" (Nezha: The Devil Child Conquers the Dragon King) has become a prime example of the emergence of new productivity within the cultural industry, leveraging technological empowerment, industry chain collaboration, and the global dissemination of cultural IP. This study, taking "Nezha 2" as a case study, explores the inherent logic and practical paths of cultural industry innovation, revealing the specific manifestations and mechanisms of new productivity within the cultural industry. It aims to deeply integrate China's outstanding traditional culture with modern technology to empower the innovative development of China's cultural industry.

KEYWORDS

New-quality productivity; Cultural industry; Nezha: The Devil Child Conquers the Dragon King; Innovative path

1. RESEARCH BACKGROUND

1.1. Policy Background: Inheritance and Innovation, Integration of Culture and Industry

In recent years, my country has continuously promoted the "Cultural Power" strategy, emphasizing the enhancement of national soft power and international influence through the cultural industry. This requires upholding the creative transformation and innovative development of China's fine traditional culture, maintaining cultural confidence, promoting the integration of traditional Chinese culture with contemporary values and modern aesthetics, and catering to the public's demand for a modern expression of traditional culture. At the same time, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized that "scientific and technological innovation can give rise to new industries, new models, and new momentum, and is a core element in developing new-quality productive forces." He emphasized the coordinated development of "culture + industry + technology," emphasizing the empowerment of science and technology and cultural innovation, and vigorously developing the cultural industry [1].

Against this backdrop, the film industry, as a vital component of the cultural sector, has responded to cultural industry policies and strategies [2]. In recent years, domestic animated films, exemplified by the "White Snake" series, "Three Thousand Miles of Chang'an," and the "Nezha" series, have leveraged traditional culture, relying on high-quality presentation formats and technological advancements, to achieve a series of remarkable successes. This is particularly evident in "Nezha: The Devil Child Conquers the Dragon King," released on the first day of the Lunar New Year in 2025 [3]. As of February 17, 2025, "Nezha: The Devil Child Conquers the Dragon King" ranked among the top ten global box office charts, with a total box office of 12.051 billion yuan. This made it the

first Chinese film to break the 10 billion yuan mark and enter the top ten global box office. This remarkable breakthrough and achievement demonstrates the successful "reinvention and transcendence" of traditional Chinese culture.

1.2. Cultural Genes: Ideological Empathy, the General Trend

Nezha, a traditional Chinese mythological element, has been portrayed in various legends, each sharing a common thread: his unyielding spirit of rebellion and righteousness, which has become so enduring [4]. Director Jiaozi, with his innovative vision, has innovated the cultural IP of the Nezha series, remaining grounded in the mythological foundations and the traditional image of Nezha while offering a unique adaptation of the story to further enrich the spirit of Nezha.

In "Nezha 2," the characters are three-dimensional and deeply explored, embodying upright values and the complex realities of human nature. They showcase diverse emotions, including family and friendship, while embodying Eastern aesthetics and a touch of the mundane [5]. The film emphasizes the prejudiced realities of contemporary society, the oppression of powerful forces, and the helplessness and resistance of marginalized groups. The film is not only a modern reimagining of traditional Chinese culture but also a reflection of the psychological state of modern society, sparking strong emotional resonance and cultural identification.

1.3. Technical Support: Technical Support, Ultimate Craftsmanship

"Nezha: The Devil Boy Conquers the Dragon King" uses modern technology to revitalize traditional culture through "visual coding," offering an innovative and technologically advanced presentation of this tradition. Its exquisitely aesthetic special effects, meticulously detailed and vivid character expressions and landscape effects, and its groundbreaking "dynamic ink rendering engine" are hailed for their technical marvels and ingenuity [6]. The production of "Nezha: The Devil Boy Conquers the Dragon King" underwent a lengthy production process, and the meticulous work ethic and dedication of director Jiaozi and his team behind the scenes, along with their relentless dedication to overcoming technical challenges, were crucial factors in achieving this success. "Nezha: The Devil Boy Conquers the Dragon King" epitomizes the modernization of traditional Chinese culture, embodies the spirit of craftsmanship and cultural confidence, and showcases the resilient vitality of the rise of traditional Chinese culture.

2. ANALYSIS OF THE CURRENT STATUS OF CULTURAL INDUSTRY DEVELOPMENT

My country's cultural industries are in a critical period of transformation and upgrading, exhibiting a new development trend driven by new productivity. The report of the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to "uphold the position of Chinese culture, refine and showcase the spiritual symbols and cultural essence of Chinese civilization, and accelerate the construction of a Chinese discourse and narrative system." In 2024, General Secretary Xi Jinping emphasized at the 11th collective study session of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee that "new productivity is a state of advanced productivity characterized by innovation, breaking away from traditional economic growth methods and productivity development paths, and possessing high-tech, high-efficiency, and high-intelligence characteristics, in line with the new development philosophy." The rise of digital technology has provided unprecedented opportunities for the creative transformation and innovative development of China's fine traditional culture [7].

2.1. Technological Leap: Reshaping Cultural Production Empowered by New Productivity

New-quality productivity emphasizes high-quality talent, new means of production, and new types of labor subjects, driving the cultural industry's shift from "quantitative expansion" to "qualitative improvement." "New-quality productivity is driven by revolutionary technological breakthroughs, innovative allocation of production factors, and deep industrial transformation and upgrading." The success of "Nezha 2" demonstrates that digital technology has become a core driver of the transformation and upgrading of the cultural industry [8]. The film's production involved the work of nearly 140 animation companies, over 4,000 creative personnel, and nearly 2,000 special effects shots, achieving a major breakthrough in the industrialization of Chinese animated films. The special effects team utilized a dynamic ink-and-wash rendering engine to create the audiovisual spectacle of a "dragon entering the sea." Cloud rendering technology enabled real-time rendering of special effects such as the "Chentangguan Battle" and "Undersea Purgatory," delivering a visual feast for the audience. This breakthrough in digital technology has enabled a high degree of industrialization and technological advancement in animation production, demonstrating not only the advancement of Chinese animated filmmaking techniques but also the comprehensive enhancement of cultural innovation capabilities enabled by new-quality productivity.

2.2. Aesthetic Renewal: Cultural Content Creation Empowered by New Productivity

Chinese animated films are transitioning from the "Chinese School" to the "New Guofeng," emphasizing the integration of national identity and modernity. "Nezha 2" examines, refines, and recreates traditional cultural symbols to revitalize audiences' cultural memories. For props, the "Tianyuan Ding" is modeled after a Shang Dynasty flat-footed ding with dragon motifs. Taotie and cloud-thunder patterns on the ding's body are sculpted using high-resolution technology, allowing the thickness variations of the yang lines to be discerned even in 4K footage. For the setting, the "Undersea Dragon Palace" draws inspiration from the carved beams and painted rafters of Hui-style architecture and the circular structures of Fujian tulou (earthen buildings). Over 1,900 special effects shots meticulously capture the visual impact of its soaring eaves and brackets. Sound-wise, the battle score features pipa fingering to simulate torrential rain, while martial arts moves are synced with Peking Opera gong and drum beats. The impact of Ao Bing's ice hammer is sampled from the Zenghouyi chime bells, creating an intertextual connection between "auditory archaeology" and "visual research." Through the application of digital technology, cultural relics that were originally dormant in museums, records scattered in ancient books, and memories circulated among the people have been transformed into interactive and resonant narrative units, completing a modern interpretation of China's excellent traditional culture and making the ancient myths shine with new vitality in the modern context.

2.3. Breaking the Circle of Communication: The Effectiveness of Cultural Communication Empowered by New Productivity

The overseas dissemination of "Nezha 2" has successfully broken away from the traditional single path of "film distribution-theater screening" and instead relied on new-quality productivity to build a "multi-frequency resonance" mechanism: the same parent content was cut into diverse forms to adapt to the context of different platforms - from 30-second visual climax clips, 3 minutes of behind-the-scenes production footage, to 10 minutes of in-depth analysis of the world view - these content fragments were precisely delivered through overseas mainstream social networks such as TikTok, YouTube, and Instagram Reels, achieving 350 million cross-platform exposures in the first week of its release. The deep driving force behind the film's "breakthrough" comes from the "cultural translation" thinking at the front end of the production. On the visual level, the creative team refined rich oriental symbols such as the Dunhuang flame pattern and the Sanxingdui bronze texture into

highly saturated color blocks and streamlined motion effects with international recognition, freeing it from the constraints of specific cultural context and directly capturing the "first sight" attention of global audiences; on the narrative and emotional level, the film condenses the passionate core of "going against the will of heaven and changing fate" into a slogan such as "My fate, my call", which combines the rhythm of the original sentence with the emotional framework of "self-empowerment" in the English world; at the same time, Nezha's spirit of resistance of "If there is no road ahead, I will step out a way" resonates wonderfully with the survival cry of the lower groups in the United States and the desire of Indian youth to break through the class, and Shen Gongbao's accusation that "prejudice is a mountain" accurately hits the collective pain of ethnic minorities around the world. The film has constructed a set of "commensurable cultural grammar" - that is, while retaining the oriental charm, it establishes connections with global audiences in visual coding and emotional core, thereby effectively reducing the "cultural discount".

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out, "We must better promote the spread of Chinese culture, use literature to convey ideas, use literature to spread voices, use culture to explain it to the world, and promote more excellent cultures with Chinese characteristics, embodying the Chinese spirit, and containing Chinese wisdom." Chinese animated films are no longer satisfied with the domestic market, and are actively and more intelligently participating in global competition and cultural dialogue. The "going global" practice of "Nezha 2" further interprets the practical content of new-quality productivity empowering the "two creations" of China's excellent traditional culture, and provides a new paradigm for the cross-cultural communication of Chinese animated films.

3. THE LOGICAL MECHANISM OF NEW PRODUCTIVITY EMPOWERING CULTURAL INDUSTRY INNOVATION

As the crystallization of human civilization's wisdom, China's excellent traditional culture carries a profound historical heritage, unique values, and profound aesthetic pursuits. Against the backdrop of today's rapidly advancing modernization, how to effectively inherit and creatively transform this culture has become a crucial issue that urgently requires in-depth exploration.

As an advanced form of modern, high-level technological productivity and scientific and technological innovation, "new quality productivity" embodies new technologies and driving forces, opening up new horizons for the robust and innovative development of the cultural industry system and offering a new perspective on cultural IP innovation, as the cultural industry, driven by technology, strives to achieve high-quality and innovative development. By analyzing the national heritage and modern innovation behind the explosive success of "Nezha," we offer insights into how new quality productivity can empower the innovative development of the cultural industry.

In "Nezha 2," the film utilizes fundamental characteristics of Chinese culture, along with clothing and imagery bearing unique cultural markers, to digitally express and understand Chinese culture. This approach uses abstract cultural expressions to convey and disseminate information. For example, the flame patterns on Nezha's clothing and the cloud-thunder patterns displayed by Ao Bing have become iconic symbols of the film's characters. The film also features various wine jars and musical instruments, all drawn from traditional Chinese culture. These national symbols are then conveyed to the audience through technologically advanced and modern means, stimulating their cultural memories. Furthermore, the film cleverly utilizes visual conflicts between color and scenic effects, integrating them with metaphors embedded in people's minds. Nezha's "red" reflects his fiery and rebellious spirit, while Ao Bing's "blue" symbolizes his gentle and calm personality. The contrast between red and blue, fire and water, creates a harmonious relationship, successfully aligning with the traditional Chinese aesthetic and the audience's aesthetic needs and spiritual landscape.

Using modern metaphors of classical thought to reflect the conflicts of modern society, the film fosters spiritual resonance and reflection, reconstructing traditional ideas into modern concepts with

universal value. Nezha's line, "My fate is in my own hands, not in the hands of God," became a viral hit for the 2025 New Year. Behind it lies the reality of contemporary youth's struggles in society, whether embodied in a rebellious spirit of unattainable yet cherished goals, or the self-motivation that fuels their ability to overcome obstacles. The class conflict between Shen Gongbao and the immortals further embodies the people's resistance to unfair hierarchies and their ideal of "lifelong equality." The film uses contemporary social issues as metaphors, implicitly embedded within the film, resonating deeply with audiences and activating their cultural memories.

4. RESEARCH ON THE PATH OF INNOVATION OF CULTURAL INDUSTRIES EMPOWERED BY NEW PRODUCTIVITY

Driven by new-quality productivity, "Nezha 2" has achieved a qualitative leap in content reconstruction, visual presentation, and language expression, and has accumulated successful experience for the innovative development of the cultural industry. The huge social effects and strong spiritual and material feedback it produced after its screening demonstrate the huge potential for high-quality development of the cultural industry.

4.1. Cultivate Content and Root in Fertile Cultural Soil

China's fine traditional culture, deeply embedded in the DNA of the Chinese nation, is a rich source of inspiration for the cultural industry. The creative transformation and innovative development of this fine traditional culture should not be a slavish copying, but rather a modern translation of traditional culture to meet the spiritual needs of contemporary people. We should innovate modes of expression and forms, leverage modern technology to enhance the cultural experience, and promote development through resonance. Cultural creation reflects the values of an era. Its content should closely align with the themes of the times and meet people's growing spiritual and cultural needs, eliminating the sense of distance that stands as a thick barrier between contemporary people and culture.

4.2. Integration and Prosperity: Creating Coordinated Development

Build a cultural industry ecosystem under the tripartite collaboration of "culture + industry + technology", promote the deep integration of culture, technology, and industries inside and outside of culture, empower cultural innovation and development with technology, and promote the prosperity of the cultural industry with cultural innovation. First, the effective integration of technology, using technologies such as VR and AR to achieve breakthroughs in cultural expression and dissemination; second, the effective integration within the cultural industry, breaking down internal barriers within the cultural industry, preventing and controlling malicious competition and other bad behaviors, achieving complementary advantages, win-win cooperation, and building a coordinated development of the cultural industry system; third, cross-border breakthroughs, strengthen the deep integration of the cultural industry with other industries such as education and tourism, explore channels for the multi-faceted development of the cultural industry, and fully tap cultural resources.

4.3. Extending the Chain and Increasing Value, Reconstructing The Whole Chain Ecosystem

Deeply explore and effectively utilize cultural IP, fully develop its commercial value, incubate diversified business models, integrate resources throughout the entire industry chain, form a virtuous cycle, and increase added value. Upstream, strengthen technological innovation, increase R&D investment, and leverage technology in the cultural sector to encourage cultural innovation and creativity, enhancing cultural soft power. Midstream, expand channels, create multi-platform and

multi-channel cultural dissemination pathways, increase the depth and breadth of cultural communication, and leverage emerging technology channels to expand sales channels for cultural products. Downstream, further explore IP, develop derivative products, strengthen brand operations, increase product added value, and build a complete industrial ecosystem.

5. CHALLENGES FACING INNOVATION IN THE CULTURAL INDUSTRY

The remarkable achievements of "Nezha 2" are undoubtedly an important milestone in the development of China's cultural industry. With a global box office of over 15 billion yuan and 350 million overseas exposures, it is regarded as an example of the successful application of new-quality productivity in the cultural field. However, behind its success are problems such as institutional gaps, aesthetic traps and structural faults, which bring considerable challenges to the sustainable development of the industry.

The "time difference" between the rapid pace of technological iteration and traditional institutional norms is a prominent problem facing the current cultural industry. The cloud rendering, particle ink painting and real-time motion capture of "Nezha 2" have pushed animation production into the computing power era. Digital technology has broken the invisible barriers of traditional culture caused by the gap between the times, and symbols such as flame patterns and bronze masks have been deconstructed into reproducible data particles. However, the current copyright law has no detailed rules on the ownership of "algorithm-assisted generated content". If there is a lack of corresponding cultural data classification and sovereignty awareness, it may bring the risk of symbolic de-territorialization.

New-quality productivity demands that culture imbue products with aesthetic appeal. However, in practice, the "aesthetic trap" of excessively pursuing visual spectacle while neglecting narrative depth persists. Ao Bing's pivotal moment of self-destruction is compressed into less than two minutes, with significant technical resources invested in architectural detail and special effects. Audiences marvel at the spectrum of Hui-style blue bricks but struggle to comprehend the ethical conflict between the dragon clan and destiny. They can memorize every exquisite image but fail to recount the philosophical reflections behind the story. If technical aesthetics fail to serve the narrative of value, even the most sophisticated modeling loses its meaning.

The structural shortage of multidisciplinary talent is an invisible ceiling constraining sustained innovation in the cultural industry. The massive production team of "Nezha 2" exposed a severe shortage of cross-disciplinary talent, both proficient in traditional cultural knowledge and mastering modern digital technology. Within the 4,000-person creative team, less than 5% possessed both the technical expertise and comprehensive expertise in Shang and Zhou dynasty pattern research and HDRI lighting. This imbalance in talent distribution necessitated a two-step approach to project development: first, cultural and museum experts provided pattern data and research opinions, followed by the technical team's digital modeling. This division of labor and collaboration not only incurs high communication costs but also leads to creative loss during translation. The higher education system is also struggling to meet this demand. While 96 universities nationwide offer programs in cultural industry management, curricula that deeply integrate cultural and museum research with digital modeling and aesthetic principles remain scarce. Companies are forced to invest additional resources in "in-house training." While this type of supplementary training can alleviate immediate challenges, it fails to fundamentally address the systemic misalignment between talent development and industrial upgrading.

6. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The phenomenal success of "Nezha: The Devil Child Conquers the Dragon King" is essentially due to its digital revitalization of the cultural DNA of China's fine traditional culture. This is driven by the dual power of "cultural soft power" and "technological hard power." It marks the strategic transformation of domestic animation from localized storytelling to globalized communication, and is a prime example of how new productivity empowers the innovative development of China's fine traditional culture. Empowering the innovative development of the cultural industry requires a combination of national identity and modernity. While breaking the homogeneity of traditional culture, "Nezha 2" leverages technology to achieve a multifaceted retelling of traditional culture, deeply exploring cultural IP, increasing value, and stimulating the genes of national culture. At the same time, it engages with real-life social issues, resonating with audiences through the contradictions and conflicts of real life.

It's important to note that with the deep integration of modern technology, we must be mindful of the attendant risk of putting the cart before the horse, namely, neglecting the expression of the cultural essence of China's fine traditional culture and instead focusing solely on "showmanship." We should build a cultural industry ecosystem based on the synergy of "culture + industry + technology," guided by the mainstream values of contemporary society, adapt to the trends of the times, strengthen cultural exchange and mutual learning, and promote the continuous advancement of Chinese culture.

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